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READINGS IN  
Attitude Theory and Measurement

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READINGS IN

# Attitude Theory and Measurement

*Edited by*

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## *Preface*

The concept of attitude has played a major role in the history of social psychology. From its relatively simple beginning as a state of preparedness or a set to make a particular overt response, the concept has grown into its present-day formulation as a complex, multidimensional concept consisting of affective, cognitive, and conative components. As Gordon Allport pointed out more than thirty years ago, ". . . attitude is probably the most distinctive and indispensable concept in contemporary American social psychology. No other term appears more frequently in experimental and theoretical literature." Despite the enormous growth of social psychology, and the diversity of interest of contemporary social psychologists, Allport's words are as true today as they were in 1935. In addition, the attitude concept has come to play an increasingly important part in almost all of the behavioral sciences and many of the applied disciplines.

Because of the enormity of the attitude literature, and the proliferation of sources in which it appears, the study of attitudes has become difficult for all but the most dedicated students. Perhaps even more difficult, however, are the problems that confront the teacher attempting to prepare a course in the attitude area. Not only is he likely to be overwhelmed by the sheer quantity and diversity of the literature, but he will soon be appalled by its relative inaccessibility to his students. It was primarily the latter problem that led to the preparation of this book.

The initial plan was to bring together a collection of articles that would represent the three major facets of the study of attitude, that is, theory, measurement, and change. It soon became obvious, however, that no single volume could adequately sample all of the attitude literature. Since it has always been my opinion that a complete understanding and analysis of attitude change is impossible without first having a thorough knowledge of attitude theory and measurement, I decided to restrict the book to these latter two topics. Even though this restriction greatly reduced the number of articles that were considered, many excellent articles discussing attitude theory and measurement have also had to be excluded.

The selection of articles has been guided by several criteria. First, and foremost, I have deliberately emphasized those articles that have already demonstrated their lasting significance to an understanding of the attitude concept. Every attempt has been made to present the original contributions of those authors whose names repeatedly occur in any review of the attitude literature.

Second, although approximately half the book is concerned with attitude measurement, an attempt was made to select only those articles that are primarily concerned with the theory underlying attitude measurement rather than with the measurement process per se. It should be noted that in order to make the book maximally useful to all students, many commendable articles that involve extremely complex mathematical analyses have been omitted.

Third, an attempt was made to sample as wide a variety of historical and contemporary approaches to attitude theory and measurement as was possible.

Clearly, even within the limits established by these criteria, I have undoubtedly included articles that some instructors may find of little value, and have omitted others

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that some of my colleagues will regard as indispensable. It is unfortunate that at least three of these omissions (the contributions of Leon Festinger, Bert Green, and Eckard Hess) have been necessitated by copyright laws. Although I am indebted to many colleagues for recommendations and advice that guided the selection of articles, the responsibility for the remainder of the omissions and commissions is solely my own.

I am also indebted to the many authors (and publishers) who did grant permission to reprint their articles and, in particular, to those who graciously allowed me to edit their articles. I hope that my modification has in no way reduced the significance or meaningfulness of their contributions. Similarly, I hope my use of editorial license to include some of my own views has not detracted from the quality of the remainder of the selections.

I thank also my colleagues and students at the University of Illinois who have continually provided support and encouragement. In addition, I must thank two very special women: my secretary, Marlys Brown, who assisted me throughout every phase of the project and who capably handled almost all of the administrative details; and my wife, Deborah, who, in her usual competent manner, managed to bear with me while I was working on this book.

Martin Fishbein

*Urbana, Illinois*  
*April 1967*

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